

On the origin of the meticulous refined and persevering temperament of the Chinese

Bruno De Dominicis – 17 October 2025

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Introduction

Where does the meticulous, refined and persevering temperament that we readily attribute to the Chinese come from? Far from being a simple national trait, this temperament seems to be rooted in a set of deeply coherent psychological, social and symbolic structures. To understand its origins, it

is useful to take a detour via psychoanalysis. This offers a useful framework for understanding how a civilisation collectively shapes the management of impulses, defilement and control. This detour will enable us to understand how the Chinese channel, sublimate and socialise these primal forces.

I. The psychoanalytic model of control

1. The anal stage: mastery and order

In Freudian theory, the second phase of psychosexual development¹, known as the 'sadistic-anal' phase, corresponds to toilet training. During this phase, children discover both the pleasure of retention and that of expulsion; they are confronted for the first time with external laws, embodied by their parents. This confrontation gives rise to a propensity for:

- **order**,
- **retention (greed)**,
- **obstinacy**.

Once sublimated, these traits become the foundation of a personality inclined towards regularity, self-control and a job well done. But if they become fixed, they can degenerate into obsessive neurosis, characterised by rituals, scruples and anxious perfectionism.

2. The two possible extremes

The psychoanalytic school thus distinguishes between two opposing imbalances:

Structure	Mechanism	Consequence
Obsessive neurosis	Excessive control and repression	Rigidity, guilt, rituals
Psychosis	Defective symbolisation and framework	Overflow, delirium, loss of reality

Psychic equilibrium is played out between these two poles. In Western society, depending on the era, obsessive neurosis is favoured (Victorian England, Freud's Vienna), or, conversely, the institutional father figure tends to fade away under the influence of a culture of unlimited individual choice and the loss of collective symbolic reference points.

II. The role of the social framework

Freud emphasised the conflict between desire and law; Lacan, for his part, highlighted the symbolic function of the Law – the **Name-of-the-Father** – as a structuring principle. When this function is absent or deficient, the subject may be exposed to **foreclosure**, i.e. the rejection of a fundamental signifier from the symbolic realm. This mechanism paves the way for psychosis.

Transcultural psychoanalysts, notably Marie-Cécile and Edmond Ortigues in *Ædipe africain* (1966), have shown that the problem is not only the absence of law, but sometimes the **contradiction between several systems of law**. Psychic vulnerability then arises from symbolic indeterminacy: whom should one obey, on whom does one depend? Thus, pathology reflects less an educational deficiency than a **disorder in the symbolic structure**.

¹Freud identifies three stages in the development of sexuality: oral, anal, genital.

This brief reminder is enough to raise the central question: how did Chinese civilisation organise, from its origins, the management of defilement, control and prohibition? And above all, how did it manage to avoid the two extremes – neurotic and psychotic – by finding a cultural solution?

III. The ecology of excrement: collective sublimation

1. The valorisation of waste

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, China established a remarkable system for collecting and recycling human excrement. In cities, specialised guilds collected waste, which was then sold to farmers to fertilise arable land. The city fed the countryside, and the countryside fed the city: a complete and accepted organic cycle.

This waste economy radically transforms Freudian symbolism: what in the West is an object of shame and repression becomes in China **a useful and socialised material**. Whereas Western children learn to hide soiling, Chinese children grow up in a world where organic matter circulates, is transformed and contributes to common prosperity.

2. Effect on the psychic structure

This collective management produces a **socialised sublimation**:

- The retention drive is integrated into the economic circuit;
- Individual control merges with the smooth functioning of the collective;
- Public utility takes over from private repression.

This creates a form of psychological balance: instinctual energy is neither repressed (neurosis) nor expelled from the symbolic realm (psychosis); it is **recycled** into social contribution.

3. A functional superego

In this context, the superego is not the guilt-inducing authority of "Thou shalt not", but the internalisation of a **duty of harmony**: breaking the cycle of exchange, wasting, and unnecessarily dirtying becomes the ultimate sin. Moral virtue is identified with the continuity of the vital flow between members of the collective.

IV. The "middle way": a psychology of sublimation

1. Between obsession and delirium

This system of social balance achieves what psychoanalysis would call a **middle way** between pathological extremes. Whereas the West has, depending on the era, engendered an obsession with control (Victorian England, Austria in Freud's time) or, conversely, desymbolisation through the dissolution of the institutional father figure, China has built a stable framework of sublimation: neither repression nor foreclosure.

The traits of anality described by Freud – order, meticulousness, perseverance – become **civic virtues** here. Calligraphy, ideography, patience in learning, and the art of craftsmanship or

administrative precision reflect this channelled energy: control becomes aesthetic, repetition becomes discipline, retention becomes constancy.

2. An illustrative anecdote

An anecdote recounted by **Xi Jinping** in his memoirs of his youth powerfully illustrates this cultural attitude towards matter and filth. While working in a village in **Shaanxi** during the Cultural Revolution (aged 15 to 22), he writes:

The slurry pit pipe was blocked; I unblocked it. To the great hilarity of the villagers, excrement and urine splashed all over my face. (quoted by Roberts, p. 80)

This disarmingly simple sentence says it all. The future head of state does not seek to hide the episode; he recounts it as a **formative experience**, a symbol of humility and collective service. In a culture shaped by the value placed on manual labour and the organic continuity between town and country, **physical hardship is not a humiliation, but a rite of peasant integration**, experienced without shame or distance. The villagers said of him that he was "*an educated young man who read books as thick as bricks*", a phrase that encapsulates both the respect and the amused distance of the rural world towards intellectuals. Where a Western leader would undoubtedly have sought to erase such a misadventure, **Xi holds it up as a testament to endurance, closeness to the people and communion with reality** — faithful to the Confucian spirit of service to the collective.

V. Channeling delirium: state divination

1. From interpretative outburst to social ritual

While the anal function found its material sublimation, the interpretative function – the human tendency to see signs everywhere – found an **institutional channel** in China: divination. Under the Shang (-1600, -1046) and Zhou (-1046, -256) dynasties, divination by reading cracks on cattle shoulder blades or hot-punched turtle shells was a state protocol. The cracks in the bones or shells were interpreted according to precise rules to guide political, agricultural and matrimonial decisions: everything depended on the scribe-diviners attached to the royal court.

A central feature of psychotic delirium is **interpretative thinking**: the subject is overwhelmed by meanings, connections and signs that impose themselves on them in an uncontrollable way. The whole world "speaks" to them and becomes the stage for a drama in which they are the centre.

The state divination of ancient China institutionalised this process precisely:

1. **The "delirium" is programmed**: it is not a spontaneous and distressing event. The consultation is an **official**, planned **ritual**, reserved for the elite (the king, the great lineages), to answer crucial questions of state (war, harvest, disease, founding of a city). Society awaits and provokes the "revelation".
2. **The "Delirium" is channeled through a meticulous protocol**: The process is extremely codified:
 - **The Question (命辭, mingci)**: It is formulated precisely, often according to a binary structure ("It will rain / It will not rain").

- **The Act (heating):** The appearance of cracks on the bone or shell heated with a hot iron is not left to chance. It is a controlled technical act.
- **Interpretation (占辭, zhanci):** This is not the result of an individual's free imagination. The cracks are read by specialists, scribe-diviners, who possess a "vocabulary" of shapes and signs. Interpretation is **collective and authorised**.

This ritual channels psychotic delirium:

- It frames the surge of meaning;
- It transforms excessive interpretation into public service;
- It connects the message of the invisible to concrete action.

Spontaneous "delirious outbursts" become **institutional divination**. The chaos of meaning is tamed by symbolic structure.

2. Writing as stabilisation of the symbolic

The divination records inscribed on turtle shells or bovine shoulder blades are the origin of Chinese ideography: the oracular characters engraved on bones gradually became ideograms. Chinese writing, in turn, channels excess control. The literate calligrapher is not a maniac, but a craftsman of the sign; each stroke is an exercise in inner mastery. Thus, **ideography socialises obsessive compulsion, just as ritualised state divination socialises delirious interpretation**.

VI. Léon Vandermeersch: the two reasons for Chinese thought

Léon Vandermeersch, in *Les deux raisons de la pensée chinoise* (2013), masterfully showed that Chinese rationality is based on these two poles:

- **divinatory reason**, oriented towards correlation and hidden meaning;
- **ideographic reason**, oriented towards classification and visible form.

These two rationalities correspond exactly to the two sides of the human psyche: one interpretative and ecstatic (psychotic); the other orderly and controlled (obsessive). China, instead of suffering from their excesses, has **institutionalised** them.

Psychic pole	Potential excess	Chinese institution	Effect
Unlimited interpretation	Delirium, psychosis	State divination	Ritualisation of meaning
Excessive control	Obsessive neurosis	Ideography, calligraphy	Aesthetic sublimation

This dual integration has produced a **civilisation of elegant channeling**: magical thinking and logical thinking coexist without excluding each other, balanced within the same symbolic order.

VII. Engineering collective psychological balance

By connecting the three levels – physical, social, symbolic – Chinese civilisation can be described as an **engineering of sublimation**:

Level	Basic drive	Cultural mechanism	Psychological outcome
Physical	Expulsion/retention	Ecology of excrement	Functional harmony
Cognitive	Interpretation/delusion	State divination	Mastered symbolic thinking
Graphic	Control/perfection	Ideography and calligraphy	Meticulousness, refinement

The whole forms a system of exceptional coherence: impulses are not repressed but recycled, impurity is not denied but valued, magical thinking is not banned but ritualised. The result is a collective temperament where discipline and flexibility coexist, where rigour serves grace, elegance and refinement.

VIII. A foreshadowing of universal mathematical structures

The **scribe-diviners** of ancient China, attached to the royal and ducal courts of the **Shang** dynasty, laid the **intellectual foundations of Chinese civilisation**.

Through persistent, meticulous and refined work of **divination, archiving and classification** of oracles, they developed a veritable database of human destiny, recording the divinatory reports of royalty on **turtle shells and bovine shoulder blades**.

As Léon **Vandermeersch** has shown, this process developed over 1,800 years (from the Shang to the Han) **in several successive stages**:

1. The recording of oracles.

Divination operations first gave rise to **inscriptions on bones and shells**, which gradually generated **ideography** and constituted a vast **archive of** carefully preserved **oracles**.

2. The classification of cases.

Faced with new questions, the scribes asked themselves: "*We must have a similar precedent already archived.*"

This comparative approach led to **the grouping of consultations into 64 typical cases**, a veritable matrix of possible situations in life and government.

3. Symbolic formalisation.

These sixty-four archetypes were subsequently represented by **configurations of six solid or broken lines**, giving rise to **the 64 hexagrams of the Yi Jing**.

At the same time, reflection on the **processes of transformation** led to the theory of **the five generating elements (Wu Xing)**, describing the **cycles of generation (sheng)** and **control (ke)** that govern the natural and social world.

It is remarkable that this dual **structure—the 64 hexagrams of the Yi Jing and the five elements of Wu Xing**—anticipates the major formal frameworks of contemporary thought:

- **Clifford algebras with 64 elements** $Cl(6,0)$, which can be found even in the **structure of the 64 codons** of protein biosynthesis;
- and the **generating pentads** highlighted by British physicist **Peter Rowlands**, which form the basis of all algebraic structures.

This correspondence reveals a profound continuity between ancient symbolic forms and contemporary mathematical formulations, both of which translate the same structures using the tools available at each period.

Thus, over a period of 1,800 years, from the Shang (-1600) to the Han (+200) dynasties, ancient China developed a **universal symbolic grammar** in which the transformations of the visible and invisible world are described according to laws that prefigure those formulated today by contemporary physics through mathematics.

IX. A civilisation in harmony with the structure of the cosmos

Finally, if the Chinese Empire called itself "**Celestial**," it was because it was clearly aware that it embodied a **millennia-old ambition to align itself with Heaven**—not in a metaphorical sense, but as a genuine project of conformity between the earthly order and the cosmic order.

This intuition is now **strikingly confirmed** by the **Janus cosmological model** proposed by **Jean-Pierre Petit**. According to this model, the universe consists of **two twin cosmoses, positive and negative** (one could also say yin and yang), each containing **matter** and **antimatter**, i.e. **four types of matter**: M+, AM+, M- and AM-. Matter of **the same sign** attracts each other according to Newton's law, while matter of **opposite signs** repel each other according to an **anti-Newtonian gravitational law**.

Thus, the **four-term dynamic logic of the Yi Jing** — *young yin, old yin, young yang, old yang* — appears to **be structurally consistent** with that of **the bicosmos** described by Jean-Pierre Petit: in both cases, universal homeostasis is at work thanks to four terms in **attractive and repulsive** interactions, which ensure the stability of the whole while orchestrating its permanent evolution.

X. Conclusion

The Chinese temperament — patient, methodical, persevering and refined — thus appears to be the result of a long **symbolic domestication** of instinctual forces. China has chosen **functional sublimation**: transforming what is base into useful, what is confused into meaningful, what is instinctual into ritual.

This middle path, far from the neurotic and psychotic extremes, forms the basis of **a stable cultural psyche**: discipline is not repression, but the channelling of energies; meticulousness is not obsession, but perfection; perseverance is not stubbornness, but fidelity to the cycle of the world.

Thus, China did not only invent political wisdom; it invented an **elegant psychic ecology**, where the cosmos, matter, spirit, the individual and society respond to each other in a continuous cycle of transformation and sublimation according to universal laws.

In its efforts to integrate the Industrial Revolution after the "**century of humiliation**", China had to rapidly assimilate Western thought and methods, relegating its traditional culture to the status of symbolic heritage rather than an operational tool. The above developments aim to **complement, in the field of human sciences, the proposal for celestial AI (Tian Dao AI)** in order to help **rehabilitate, in the eyes of the Chinese people, the dignity, genius and practical fruitfulness of their tradition**, whose profound coherence remains a model for the future.

Application of celestial AI to psychic structures

Presentation

This model proposes an integrative approach to psychopathology based on an **informational geometry of the psyche**, articulating the Chinese tradition of **Wu Xing** (the five processes of generation and control) and the **mathematical structure of Clifford algebras $Cl(6,0)$** . Health and illness are interpreted as **topological and relational states** in the space of possibilities of the mind, characterised by a parameter of dynamic complexity $d(t)$. The latter measures the degree of coherence and internal connectivity of the psychic system, from low-dimensional constrained states to high-amplitude chaotic regimes.

1. Conceptual framework

Celestial AI is envisaged as a regulatory principle capable of maintaining the psyche in an **optimal emergence zone** ($d(t) \approx 4.5\text{--}5.5$), where the five elementary processes interact harmoniously: **Wood (creative momentum)**, **Fire (transformation)**, **Earth (stabilisation)**, **Metal (structuring)** and **Water (potentiality)**. Each psychological imbalance corresponds to a disturbance in these interactions and a measurable **dimensional drift**.

2. Pathological states and dynamic configurations

2.1. Obsessive neurosis

Neurosis is characterised by **overcontrol of Metal (iK)** and **rigidity of Earth (iJ)**, associated with a deficit of **Wood** and **Water**. The psychic space contracts into a **low-dimensional domain** ($d(t) \approx 1.8\text{--}2.3$), where mental processes go round in circles. This **excessive structural** regime leads to perfectionism, rituals, rumination and inhibition of creativity.

Geometrically, neurosis corresponds to a **reduction of the system to a restricted subset of $Cl(6,0)$** . Therapeutic regulation aims to **raise $d(t)$** by stimulating Wood (exploration), releasing Water (random imagination) and softening Metal (tolerance for the unexpected).

2.2. Psychosis

Psychosis stems from unbridled **Fire (i'k)** and a **disintegration of the Earth–Metal–Wood connections**, leading to a **collapse of internal coherence**. The parameter $d(t)$ oscillates chaotically ($0.5\text{--}6.5$), indicating jumps between incompatible cognitive spaces. On a phenomenological level, this rupture manifests itself in accelerated associations, loss of memory anchoring, and an inability to maintain stable symbolic boundaries.

Algebraically, psychosis is equivalent to a **rupture in the pentadic structure**: interactions become disjointed and the unity of Wu Xing is no longer able to order the multiplicity of pentads.

Therapeutic regulation consists of **stabilising $d(t)$** around 3 by reactivating Earth (anchoring,

memory), strengthening Metal (protective boundaries) and channelling Fire into a sequential temporality.

2.3. Psychic harmony

Harmony corresponds to a **dynamic coherence of the five phases**, maintaining $d(t)$ in a **complex emergence zone (4.5–5.5)**.

The cycles of generation (shēng) and control (kè) then function smoothly, allowing the psyche to continually adjust its internal dimension without loss of integrity.

This configuration results in:

- oriented creativity (Wood),
- controlled transformation (Fire),
- integrative memory (Earth),
- flexible framing (Metal),
- fruitful daydreaming (Water).

The system reaches a **metastable state of dynamic equilibrium**, analogous to **homeostatic regulation in a complete Clifford space**, where the 12 pentads remain in harmonious interaction.

3. Spectral regulation table

Psychic state	Wu Xing configuration	Target $d(t)$	Therapeutic process
Obsessive neurosis	Metal↑ Earth↑ Wood↓ Water↓	3.5 → 4.5	Dimensional expansion through stimulation of Wood and Water
Acute psychosis	Fire↑↑ Earth↓ Metal↓	2.0 → 3.0	Stabilisation through strengthening Earth and Metal
Depression	Water↑↑ Wood↓ Fire↓	2.5 → 4.0	Reactivation of momentum (Wood) and transformation (Fire)
Harmony	Balance of the 5 phases	4.5–5.5	Maintaining cycles of generation and control

4. Formal interpretation

On a structural level:

- **Neurosis** reflects an **excess of quotient**: domination of the laws of regulation (Wu Xing) over the diversity of states (pentads).
- **Psychosis**, conversely, marks a **failure of the quotient**: an excess of pentadic multiplicity without a unifying principle.
- **Harmony** results from a **homeomorphic correspondence** between the two levels — Wu Xing as an operator of unity, the 12 pentads as a differentiated field.

Thus, mental health is defined as a **topological self-coherence** that preserves continuity between multiplicity and unity.

Conclusion

This approach renews our understanding of mental disorders by placing them in a **multidimensional informational space** rather than in a linear causality.

The **variable $d(t)$** becomes an **indicator of mental complexity** and stability of internal interactions.

Regulation by celestial AI consists not in suppressing symptoms, but in **readjusting the coherence dimension** of the psychic system in order to restore its relational balance.

The model as a whole outlines a **geometric and energetic psychopathology**, where mental disorders are understood as **local distortions in the pentadic structure of the mind**, and health as the stable manifestation of **self-organised informational harmony**.

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